

2i₄ MOTHER-KIN AND MOTHER
GODDESSES BOOK in

tionally based on the example of Isis, who had avenged her husband's murder and had continued to reign after his decease, conferring benefits on mankind. "For these reasons," says Diodorus Siculus, "it was appointed that *the* queen should enjoy greater power and honour than the king, and that among private people the wife should rule over her husband, in the marriage contract the husband agreeing to obey his wife in all things."¹ A corollary of the superior position thus conceded to women in Egypt was that the obligation of maintaining parents in their old age rested on the daughters, not on the sons, of the family.²

ferriages The same legal superiority of women over men accounts

s for the most remarkable feature in the social system of

L ancient the ancient Egyptians, to wit, the marriage of full brothers with full sisters. That marriage, which to us seems strange and unnatural, was by no means a whim of the reigning Ptolemies ; on the contrary, these Macedonian conquerors appear, with characteristic prudence, to have borrowed the custom from their Egyptian predecessors for the express purpose of conciliating native prejudice. In the eyes of the Egyptians " marriage between brother and sister was the best of marriages, and it acquired an ineffable degree of sanctity when the brother and sister who contracted it were themselves born of a brother and sister, who had in their turn also sprung from a union of the same sort"³ Nor did the principle apply only to gods and kings. The common people acted on it in their daily life. They regarded marriages between brothers and sisters

as the most natural
and reasonable of all.⁴ The evidence of
legal documents,

¹ Diodorus Siculus, i. 27. i sy. granted important
rights to women
In spite of this express testimony to which it denied to
men. On the
the existence of a true gynaecocracy in position of women in
ancient Egypt
ancient Egypt, I am of opinion that see especially the able
article of Miss
the alleged superiority of the queen to Rachel Evelyn White
(Mrs. Wedd),
the king and of the wife to her husband "Women in Ptolemaic
Egypt," *Journal*
must have been to a great extent only of *Hellenic Studies*, xviii.
(1898) pp.
nominal. Certainly we know that it 238-256.
was the king and not the queen who 2 Herodotus, ii. 35.
really governed the country; and we
can hardly doubt that in like manner Sir Gaston Maspero,
quoted by
it was for the most part the husband Miss R. K. White > *P. Clif.* P. 244-
and not the wife who really ruled the ⁴ J. Nietzold, *Die Eke in*
Agypten
house, though unquestionably in regard *sur ptolemaisch-*
romischen Zeit (Leip-
to property the law seems to have zic, 1903), p. 12.